

AN
E S S A Y
ON THE
NEW SPECIES of WRITING
FOUNDED BY
Mr. *F I E L D I N G*:
With a Word or Two upon the
MODERN STATE of CRITICISM.

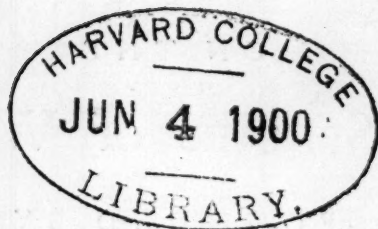
*Qui, quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
Pleniùs ac meliùs Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.
Cur ita crediderim, nisi quid te detinet, audi.*

HOR.

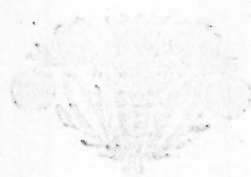


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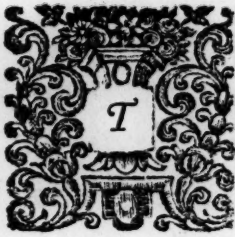
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P R E F A C E.

GENTLE READER,

 *HE new Sect of Biographers (founded by Mr. Fielding) is already grown so very numerous from the Success of the Original, that an Attempt of this Kind is in some Measure necessary, to put a Stop to the unbounded Liberties the Historians of this comic Stamp might otherwise indulge themselves: and, if possible, to prevent any from undertaking the Labours of Mr. Fielding, without an adequate Genius. Should the following Sheets be of Force enough to hinder the weak, sickly*

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sickly Birth of a Joe Thompson, Charlotte Summers, or Peregrine Pickle, in Embrio ; the Town would undoubtedly be glad to exchange the heavy Work of a voluminous Scribler for the more easy Burden of a loose Pamphlet.

The first Critics drew their Rules from the first Professors of the Art they made their Observations on ; which were afterwards the settled Standards by which the Worth of their Successors was to be determin'd. In Imitation of so great an Example are the Rules for the future Historians of this kind drawn from the Works of their Original Mr. Fielding. But I have even ventur'd to exceed these Limits, which I propos'd to myself on first setting out, and have dar'd to censure very freely some Parts of the Works of their great Original ; which had I pursu'd, in remarking on the long Series of his Imitators, my Pamphlet would have insensibly swell'd into an enormous Volume.

P R E F A C E. iii

lume. This Part of my Task may, without Vanity, be said to be perform'd in a more Gentleman-like Manner than our Author has yet been us'd by any of his Critics. If the Examiner of Tom Jones, and the Author of Bampfylde Moore Carew may deserve that Name. Think not, Gentle Reader, that the Objection made to those Writers are meant to intimate the pre-eminent Worth of this Performance; which, should it meet with Success in the World might entice the Author to expose himself by some future Pieces. If otherwise, will (more perhaps to his Credit) warn him to take an everlasting Farewell of Authorism.

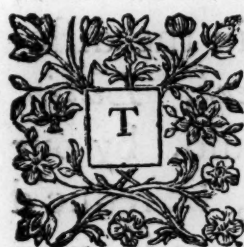


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AN
E S S A Y
ON THE
NEW SPECIES of WRITING

FOUNDED BY
Mr. *F I E L D I N G*, &c.



THOUGH I am not blef-
fed with the worthy Qua-
lifications of a modern
Critic, *viz.* Self-conceit,
Ill-nature and Prejudice,
yet am I hardy enough to offer to the
Public my Thoughts on the New Spe-
cies of Writing lately introduc'd by
Mr. *Fielding*, by substituting (as far
as lays in the Power of one who com-
municates his Observations to the
Town under the Denomination of a
B Twelve-

Twelve-penny Author) for the First Judgment, the Second Candour, and the Third Impartiality; which Ingredients, tho' deviating extremely from our new Receipt, were formerly look'd upon as absolutely necessary towards constituting a true Critic. And here, courteous Reader, give me leave to lament that that Title, which has at sundry Times been dignified and made venerable by the most excellent and instructive Productions of a *Longinus* and an *Horace*, a *Bossu* and an *Addison*, in the different Languages of *Greek*, *Latin*, *French* and *English*; should, by our very modern Practitioners, be reduc'd to that Ignominy which was in vain attempted to be affix'd to it by the malicious Writings of a *Zoilus* and a *Dennis*. For Criticism, however it may have been degraded in this Age, was, in all the preceding ones, esteem'd an useful Science; and to be thought a Critic was no mean Title in the
Re-

Republic of Letters. Dr. *Newton* tells us, in the Preface to his new Edition of *Milton*, that he is next in Rank to a good Poet. And it certainly must be accounted as laudable an Undertaking as it is an arduous Task, to fix the Criterion by which the most vulgar Readers may judge with Propriety of the Beauties and Blemishes of an Author. The Corruption of this useful Branch of Learning is by no means a convincing Argument of it's Non-excellence. For we are assur'd, by no less Authority than that of the famous Dr. *Tillotson*, that we shall be led into the grossest Errors if we despise every thing on Account of it's being corrupted; since it is remarkable that the best white Wines make the sharpest Vinegar. Whence then does it proceed, that the Professors of a Science, which has always been accounted so useful towards the establishing true Learning, should be so generally stigmatiz'd as they at present

presentare?"Tis but saying of a Man,—
 Oh Lord, Sir! You can't possibly like
 him; why, he is a profess'd Critic.
 And you comprize in that one Word,
 according to the present Acception of
 it—He is a Bundle of Folly and Ill-
 nature. As I find in myself some
 little Desire of being thought a Cri-
 tic, the Reader must excuse my Va-
 nity, if I take some Pains to rescue
 the Word from the Misapplication it
 now labours under : And if my Rea-
 sons should prove of any Weight,
 those Gentlemen who have a sincere
 Regard for Criticism, will be good-
 natur'd enough to over-look the Cause,
 that produces so good an Effect. A
 true Critic then is, not a meer bluster-
 ing Fellow, that knocks you down
 with an *ipse dixit* ; condemns good
 and bad indiscriminately ; and, after
 having swagger'd through twenty or
 thirty Pages, goes off in a Flash.—
 No, my dear Friend, this is quite a
 different Creature, a meer Ass in a
 Lion's

Lion's Skin ; and can with no more Propriety be stil'd a Critic, than esteemed a Man of Sense. The real Critic proceeds with Candour as well as Judgment : And tho', 'tis true indeed, he discovers the Blemishes as well as Beauties, yet he always takes more Pleasure in displaying the Excellences, than raking into the Rubbish, of an Author. The Writer of *Charlotte Summers*, which I intend (in it's proper Place) to make some cursory Remarks on, in his last Address to his Readers, has express'd more Fear of being handled by the Critics than his Piece deserves. He joins in the common Opinion, in conceiving such unjust Ideas of those valuable Persons, and looks upon them as a kind of Raw-head and Bloody-bones, which a poor Author cannot be too fearful of. But surely, if a Critic is such a Person as I have describ'd above, an Author of any Repute must be highly pleas'd with falling into his Hands,

Hands, since it cannot fail of giving Credit to his Performance. It would be needless to cite many Instances of this Truth: Let it suffice to take Notice, that *Milton's Paradise Lost*, inimitable as it is, was depriv'd of near half the Reputation it now enjoys, 'till the celebrated Mr. *Addison* publish'd his excellent Remarks on that Poem in the *Spectators*. With how little Consideration then has the spurious Offspring of Mr. *Fielding*, in his poetical Generation, endeavour'd* “ To make
 “ a Party among the Fair to save the
 “ Author of the *Parish Girl* from
 “ the merciless Persecution of the nu-
 “ merous Tribe of Critics. Who
 “ (says he) may find Materials suffici-
 “ ent in this Work, to exercise their
 “ malicious Talents of finding Fault.
 “ I have already disclaim'd their Ju-
 “ risdiction, which I know must en-
 “ hance their Spleen, and perhaps
 “ put it into their Heads to press me
 “ to

* See the Author of the *Parish Girl's* last Address to his Readers.

“ to Death for not holding up my
 “ Hand to the Bar. But if I have
 “ the Fair Sex of *Great Britain* on
 “ my Side, I shall suffer the *Pien foré*
 “ *dure* with heroic Constancy, and
 “ laugh at the pointless Malice of my
 “ dull Persecutors.” What a Torrent
 of Invectives has he here pour’d out
 against us poor Critics! Dull, splenetic,
 malicious, and what not! Mr. *Pope* had
 Discernment enough to discover the
 Poet from the Man of Rhymes. But
 no body will now take the Pains to
 distinguish the Critic from the Cavi-
 ler. The Reader will be pleas’d to re-
 member, that I propos’d in the Be-
 ginning of these Pages, to substitute
 Impartiality for Prejudice. But since
 that Qualification in a Critic, is by
 long Disuse almost grown obsolete, it
 may not be amiss to enlarge on the
 Expediency of reviving it; and I
 think it cannot be better illustrated
 than by an Allusion drawn from the
 Theatre. Whoever then has been
 present

present at the Theatre on the first Night of the Representation of a new Piece, must be very sensible how particularly essential a Quality towards making any Progress in Criticism, he proposes who is bless'd with Impartiality: They must be very well acquainted how rare, how very rare it is, to meet with an unbiass'd Audience at that Juncture, neither pre-possess'd in Favour of, nor prejudic'd against, the Entertainment of the Night: And that at that Time Party runs so high, that tho' it should be one of the worst Pieces that ever disgrac'd the Theatre, the favourable Party would endeavour, *enixe manibus pedibusq;* to save it: Or if, on the contrary, the Spirit of *Shakespeare* should run thro' every Line, the other Side would endeavour to damn it *vi et armis*. But I shall take the Liberty, since I am insensibly flipt into the Playhouse, to reflect with reverential Awe on that Nonpareil of modern Criticism, *H—y*
Ch—y,

Ch—y, Esq; and bestow on that Man of Terrors, the Encomiums due to his Merit. And to do this with the more Justice, I must beg Leave to exalt the Stile above the Pitch of vulgar Pamphleteers. To begin then:

O thou tremendous Arbiter of all theatrical Representations! Whether the lofty Muse swells in the turgid Buskin, or deigns to amble in the Sock more apt for Pleasantry and Humour, all hail!—Thou Terror of *Drury*, and Fear of *Covent-Garden*, all hail!—Thou that really art (as Mr. *Garrick* in his *Lethe* has most feelingly express'd himself) the Dread of Poets, the Scourge of Players, and the Aversion of the Vulgar, receive these sincere Pieces and Commendations from a younger Brother in the noble Art of Criticism, of which you are so noble a Professor. Receive them from one who strenuously endeavours, but alas! he fears in vain, to imitate, with Justice, so worthy, so singular an

willo?

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Ex-

Example. Teach me, O teach thy Pupil, ardent for Instruction. Instruct him then, thou great Artist, to equal thee in those divine Emanations of the Soul, you are so particularly remarkable for, Spleen, Malice, and Inveteracy. Let him be able to cry out, with his unequalled Master, that there is not a brilliant Thought in *Shakespeare*, a smooth Line in *Rowe*, nor an honest Sentiment in all *Cato*.—— Whilſt thou remain’ſt the unparalled *Don Quixote*, in this moſt illuſtrious Knight-Errantry, let me humbly attend thee in the Character of thy truſty ’Squire *Sancho Pancha*. O that I were made up of Gall like thee, that my enſlam’d Boſom were ready to burſt with enthuſiaſtic Venom, which I might with Pleaſure vent on the firſt miſerable Wretch that fell in my Way, who durſt, with any Applauſe, ſtile himſelf an Author, or particularize himſelf, by any Degree of Merit, as an Actor.—Yes, I will follow

follow thee, I will industriously investigate thy Foot-steps, and tread the Path thou hast beaten for me.—Yes, thou great *H—y, Sequar*, but I am afraid, *haud passibus æquis*.*

As in the Playhouse, so in the Press. A Piece is no sooner perform'd at *Drury-Lane* or *Covent-Garden*, than the News Papers are fill'd with Advertisements of—This Day are publish'd, Remarks on, or a candid Examen of the late new Tragedy or Comedy : In all which, the Author is either allow'd to have no Faults at all, or accus'd of having run into more Errors than a Poet could possibly be guilty of. For our *Phaetons* in modern Criticism, lash on precipitately, either approve right and wrong, or abuse good and bad at random, 'till they come to the End of their Course; which, like their furious Original, 'tis a Miracle if they arrive at in Safety. This holds also, in respect to all other

* This Elogium is in a Parenthesis.

Pieces as well as Dramatic ones : And the partial Examen of *Tom Jones*, published about a Year ago, is a glaring Instance of the Truth of this Assertion.

These certain Facts, which every Person of common Observation must be acquainted with, are stronger Proofs of the great Use of Impartiality than the most well-penn'd Arguments ; and more evidently demonstrate how particularly needful it is at this Time, to restore the old true Spirit of Criticism. And as the Author of the following Sheets, by not being acquainted with the Founder of this new Biography which he is now adventurous enough to make his Observations on, cannot be bias'd by Ill-nature against, or too tender a Regard for, a Person he is utterly a Stranger to, he hopes the candid Reader will be inclined to believe him, when he declares that his real Intent is to display (as far as his Judgment will

will permit) the Beauties and Blemishes of the Pieces under Consideration.

I shall now begin to take a critical Review of these Histories in general, in performing which, if even Mr. *Fielding* himself does not confess that my Proceeding is impartial, I'll be content to send him my Name, that he may punish me *propria personâ* in the next humorous Piece he publishes.

Sometime before this new Species of Writing appear'd, the World had been pester'd with Volumes, commonly known by the Name of Romances, or Novels, Tales, &c. fill'd with any thing which the wildest Imagination could suggest. In all these Works, Probability was not required: The more extravagant the Thought, the more exquisite the Entertainment. Diamond Palaces, flying Horses, brazen Towers, &c. were here look'd upon as proper, and in Taste.

In

In short, the most finish'd Piece of this kind, was nothing but Chaos and Incoherency. *France* first gave Birth to this strange Monster, and *England* was proud to import it among the rest of her Neighbour's Follies. A Deluge of Impossibility overflow'd the Press. Nothing was receiv'd with any kind of Applause, that did not appear under the Title of a Romance, or Novel; and Common Sense was kick'd out of Doors to make Room for marvellous Dullness. The Stile in all these Performances was to be equal to the Subject—amazing: And may be call'd with great Propriety, 'Prose run mad.' This obtain'd a long Time. Every Beau was an *Oronides*, and all the Belles were *Starriras*: Not a *Billet-doux* but run in Heroics, or the most common Mes- sage deliver'd but in the Sublime. The Disease became epidemical, but there were no Hopes of a Cure, 'till Mr. *Fielding* endeavour'd to show the

World

World, that pure Nature could furnish out as agreeable Entertainment, as those airy non-entical Forms they had long ador'd, and persuaded the Ladies to leave this Extravagance to their *Abigails* with their cast Cloaths. Amongst which Order of People, it has ever since been observ'd to be peculiarly predominant.

His Design of Reformation was noble and public-spirited, but the Task was not quite so easy to perform, since it requir'd an uncommon Genius. For to tread the old beaten Track would be to no Purpose. Lecture would lose it's Force; and Ridicule would strive in vain to remove it. For tho' it was a Folly, it was a pleasing one: And if Sense could not yield the pretty Creatures greater Pleasure, Dear Nonsense must be ador'd.

Mr. *Fielding* therefore, who sees all the little Movements by which human Nature is actuated, found it necessary to open a new Vein of Humour,

mour, and thought the only way to make them lay down *Cassandra*, would be to compile Characters which really existed, equally entertaining with those Chimæras which were beyond Conception. This Thought produced *Joseph Andrews*, which soon became a formidable Rival to the *amazing* Class of Writers ; since it was not a mere dry Narrative, but a lively Representative of real Life. For chryſtal Palaces and winged Horſes, we find homely Cots and ambling Nags ; and inſtead of Impoſſibility, what we experience every Day.

But as Mr. *Fielding* firſt introduc'd this new kind of Biography, he reſtrain'd it with Laws which ſhould ever after be deem'd ſacred by all that attempted his Manner ; which I here propoſe to give a brief Account of. The firſt and grand one of all, (without which, in however regular a Manner the reſt is conducted, the whole Performance muſt be dead and lan-

languid) is, that thro' the whole Humour must diffuse itself. But this can by no Means be perform'd without a great Genius, nay, even a particular Sort of one: for tho' Mr. *Bayes* informs us, any Man may commence Poet by his infallible Rules; yet in this Kind of Writing he must be at a Stand without this grand Requisite. But to proceed.

The next Thing to be consider'd, is the Choice of Characters, which tho' striking and particular must be exactly copied from Nature. And who can doubt, when they see the Features of an *Abraham Adams*, or Madam *Slipslop*, faithfully delineated, but that Field will afford an agreeable Variety? Every Word they speak must be entirely consonant to the Notion the Author would have his Readers to entertain of them: And here it may not be amiss to remark the great Analogy there is between these Histories and Dramatic Per-

D formances,

formances, which Similitude I shall enlarge upon occasionally in the Progress of this Review. In regard to Character, after what I have mention'd as necessary, it would be the greatest Affront on the Reader's Understanding to point out the Comparison.

As this Sort of Writing was intended as a Contrast to those in which the Reader was even to suppose all the Characters ideal, and every Circumstance quite imaginary, 'twas thought necessary, to give it a greater Air of Truth, to entitle it *an History*; and the *Dramatis Personæ* (if I may venture to use the Expression) were christened not with fantastic high-sounding Names, but such as, tho' they sometimes bore some Reference to the Character, had a more modern Termination.

At the same Time Mr. *Fielding* ordain'd, that these Histories should be divided into Books, and these subdivided

subdivided into Chapters; and also that the first Chapter of every Book was not to continue the Narration, but should consist of any Thing the Author chose to entertain his Readers with. These if I don't forget, Mr. *Fielding* himself has nominated, the several Stages of his History, which he metaphorically calls a Journey, in which he and his Readers are Fellow-Travellers. His particular Success in these preliminary Essays demonstrates (notwithstanding what the Author of *Charlotte Summers* hints on that Head) that these are not the easiest Part of his Task; Which I believe, Mr. *Fielding* somewhere says himself.

The Story should be probable, and the Characters taken from common Life, the Style should be easy and familiar, but at the same Time sprightly and entertaining; and to enliven it the more, it is sometimes heightened to the Mock-heroic, to ridicule the Bombast and Fustian, which obtain'd

so much in the Romances. Of this Kind are his various Descriptions of the Morning, and his diverting Similes occasionally dispers'd thro' the Body of his Work. *Horace* tells us, *dulce est desipere*, but Mr. *Fielding* remember'd he added *in loco*. For which Reason, he always takes care to indulge himself in these Liberties of Stile where the Story is least interesting. The last Book of *Tom Jones* is a convincing Proof, that he can comprize a great Variety of Circumstances in as small a Compass as any Author whatsoever. Besides these Descriptions, Similes, &c. there are other Licenses of Stile which it would be too tedious to be so minute as to enlarge upon. One Circumstance however, as it is a particular one, I cannot entirely pass over in Silence. Take it then as follows.—An Author of true Humour will consider, that his Book should be entertaining
in

in the smallest Particulars, and afford Amusement

ab ovo

Usque ad mala.

For which Reason Mr. *Addison* prefix'd Mottos to his Spectators, and at the Corner of each Paper added some particular Letter, which he himself imagin'd to be not the least entertaining Part of his Speculations. And nearly for the same End, Mr. *Fielding* thought proper to be facetious in the Titles to the several Chapters of his Histories, to shew the Reader he would not permit the least Occasion to slip which offer'd an Opportunity of amusing him.

As I am fallen on the Subject of the Titles to his Chapters, it will not be improper to consider them more largely, since it will only be mentioning now some Remarks I should be obliged to make by-and-by, which, for the Sake of the Connection, I rather chuse to insert here.

And

And perhaps I may convince the Reader, these little Scraps, if rightly manag'd, conduce more to his Entertainment than he is at first aware of. 'Tis quite opposite to the Custom of the very best Writers in this Way, to give too full an Account of the Contents: it should be just hinted to the Reader something extraordinary is to happen in the seven or eight subsequent Pages, but what that is should be left for them to discover. Monsieur *Le Sage*, in his *Gil Blas*, (one of the best Books of the Kind extant) has always pursu'd this Method: He tells us *Gil Blas* is going to such or such a Place, but does not discover the least of his Adventures there; but he is more particularly cautious when any unexpected Event is to happen. The Title to one of his Chapters of that Kind is—*A Warning not to rely too much upon Prosperity.*—To another — *Chapter the fifth, being just as long as the pre-*

preceding : With many others which it is needless to enumerate. Note, 'Tis to be wish'd this Custom had been observ'd by the Author of *Roderick Random*, who tells us in his Preface, his Book is wrote in Imitation of the *Gil Blas* of Monsieur *Le Sage*. But with very little Success in my humble Opinion. As to the Titles of his Chapters, he is particularly tedious in them. This judicious Method of detaining the Reader in an agreeable Suspence, though it is right at all Times, is more particularly necessary when the History is near ended. No Writer has so strictly kept up to this as Mr. *Fielding*, in his *Tom Jones*. We are too well assured of *Gil Blas's* Prosperity a long Time beforehand, to be surpriz'd at it. But at the Beginning of the last Book of *Tom Jones*, the Reader is apt to think it an equal Chance whether he is to be hanged or married ; nor does he
undeceive

undeceive him but by gradual Narration of Facts : And lest the Reader's Curiosity should pry too far into the Truth, what admirable Titles has he invented for his Chapters in order to keep him the longer in the Dark ! such as——*In which the History draws near to a Conclusion : In which the History draws nearer to a Conclusion, &c. &c.* which every Body will own conduces greatly to their Entertainment, and a Reader of the least Discernment will perceive how much more Consequence the clever Management of these Scraps prefix'd to each Chapter is of than he at first imagin'd. With how little Judgment has the Author of *Charlotte Summers* conducted this Particular ! whose great Fault is Anticipation : That is, forestalling, by too explanatory a Title, the most remarkable Occurrences in his History. This appears even in the Title to his Book, which is, *The History of Charlotte Summers,*

Summers : or *The* FORTUNATE *Paris* Girl. What Mr. *Addison* says of the Tragedies that conclude happily, may with equal Justice be apply'd here. " We see without Concern (says he) illustrious People in Distress, when we are sure they will at last be deliver'd from their Misfortunes." Other Writers content themselves with entitling their Pieces, *The History of a Foundling, of Joseph Andrews, of Gil Blas, Roderick Random, &c.* without informing us as to the Event. As I find myself drawn into an unforeseen Length, I shall only subjoin one Instance from his Chapters, but at the same Time such an one, as will convince the Reader of Mr. *Fielding's* Excellence in this Particular. The Eighth Chapter of the last Book is perhaps one of the most interesting in the whole History, and I dare say drew Tears from many Readers. For my own Part, I am not ashamed to own I have so much of the ' Milk
E of

of human Nature' in me, that I should have been in the greatest Concerns for the Misfortunes of the unhappy Miss *Summers*, if unluckily the Author had not assur'd me before I enter'd on these distressful Scenes, she would certainly be deliver'd from her momentary Afflictions before I had read three Leaves further. To confess the Truth I was vastly angry with him for depriving me of such entertaining Sadness. We hope this Instance will convince all future Writers, that the Pleasure of the Reader x is much more exquisite from the Reserve in the Title. These Thoughts upon the Inscriptions to the Chapters were thrown together to shew, that Mr. *Fielding* had another Intention besides making the World laugh in the Lines prefix'd to each Portion of his History. Permit me therefore, gentle Reader, upon the Authority of a Critic, to banish from all Histories above the Rank of those printed in
Black-

Black-fryars, and sold at the small Price of one Penny, to tell us—*As how Thomas Hickathrift carried a Stack of Corn.* Or—*Thomas Thumb was swallow'd by a Cow*, in a Title longer than the Chapter itself. After this Exertion of my Power, as a Critic, and dispersing these my Presents to all whom they may concern; let us return whence we digress'd.

No Faculty is so scarcely to be met with, tho' at the same Time there is none more frequently necessary, than that of telling a Story well. This Quality must be possess'd in an eminent Degree by a Writer of this kind. In the Progress of his Work he must adhere pretty closely to the Manners of the Drama, *viz.* In the Beginning the Plan of his Story must be clearly open'd, and the principal Characters should appear; towards the Middle his Plot should thicken, and Affairs be brought to a Crisis; and then be

gradually unravell'd to the Reader,
'till the Piece is concluded.

The great Critics take Notice, that Epic Poems may be call'd a kind of narrative Tragedies, since they possess Character, Plot, and every Requisite of them, except the entire Dialogue of which they consist. All the Commentators on *Homer's Iliad* observe the Affinity between that Poem and the Drama ; and *Milton* is affirm'd to have originally plann'd his *Paradise lost* on the Model of a sacred Tragedy, after the Manner of his *Sampson Agonistes*. Let me be permitted then, who am but a low Critic after their high Example, to observe the same Relation these Performances I am now remarking on bear to Comedy. In one Respect indeed they have the Advantage of Theatrical Pieces. For tho' it is the common Business of both Writers to make as deep Researches into Nature as they can, and cull from that ample Field whatever is to their Purpose, yet the Bio-

Biographer may ingraft in his Performance many Characters and Circumstances, which tho' they are entirely natural and very probable, often fall below the Dignity of the Stage. Nay it often happens that these very kind of Books I am treating of fall into the Hands a Set of People who are apt to cry out, on the Sight of any Thing that gives a lively Representation of the Manners of the common People,—Oh! that's cursed low, intolerably vulgar, &c. Of this the Introducer of these Pieces was aware, and has taken a great deal of Pains to obviate the Objections of these empty Cavillers : and I believe there are few Persons who have a Taste for Humour who would thank those Gentlemen for striking out the very Passages which are the Characteristics of his Excellencies as an Author—*viz.* His thorough Insight into Low-life. I shall at present take my leave of this Subject, with observing, that as the Romances it was intended

intended to ridicule, were a kind of extravagant Landſkape, in which the Painter had repreſented purling Streams and ſhady Groves; or brazen
 X Towers, and Mountains of Adamant, juſt as they were uppermoſt in his wild Imagination; ſo this kind of Writing is the Work of a more regular Pencil, and the exact Picture of human Life; and though a Novice
 X in Painting may be more ſtruck with the falſe Glare of the firſt, a Connoiſſeur will be more charm'd with the beautiful Plainneſs, and exact Similitude of the laſt.

The many Hiſtories of this kind that lately have been publiſh'd, which undoubtedly owe their Riſe to the extraordinary Succeſs of Mr. *Fielding's* Pieces, make it more neceſſary to remark on theſe Performances.

It is very certain, that whenever any Thing new, of what kind ſoever, is ſtarted by one Man, and appears with great Succeſs in the World, it
 quickly

quickly produces several in the same Taste. A Gentleman observ'd to me the other Day that the Applause Mr. *Garrick* had so justly acquired by his threatrical Performances, had induced more Persons to come upon the Stage since his first Playing, than for twenty Years before ; and Mr. *Foote's* giving Chocolate in the *Hay-Market*, gave Birth to an hundred other Morning-Entertainments ; the good Reception the *Tatlers* and *Spectators* met with produc'd many other Papers of that sort, as the *Censor*, *Free-thinker*, *Champion*, &c. all which undoubtedly owe their Origin to those little Essays, which gain'd the respective Authors so much Credit. To descend yet lower, who can doubt but the great Reputation Mr. *Broughton* has atchiev'd from the most noble Art of Bruising, has induc'd many a brawny Youth to aim at a Proficiency in that hardy Amusement. The Reason of this is, that a
Man's

Man's Talent is often unknown to himself, 'till he sees it by Reflection in another's Productions ; which Correspondence of Fancy strikes out the latent Sparks of Genius within him, which would otherwise have lain neglected, by his not being conscious of his own proper Merit. This is sometimes the Case. But it more frequently happens, that when the Mind is warm'd by the Work of another Man, we are apt to mistake our Approbation for a Concurrence of Sentiment. That this is the most usual Occasion of the many profess'd Imitations that daily appear, is plain from the Instances just cited. For no Man can be partial enough to affirm that an Actor has arose equal to Mr. *Garrick*, a Mimic that can be put in Competition with Mr. *Foot*, or that we have read Essays equally entertaining and instructive with those of the *Tatlers* and *Spectators*.

The

The Author of the *Parish-Girl* professes an open avow'd Imitation of Mr. *Fielding's* Manner:—Nay, goes so far as to call himself his poetical Iffue. And in his Introduction to his History, where he describes his Sign, expresses himself thus.—“ I have added (says he) at the Bottom of my Board; in large Golden Capitals, *F——g's* entire Humour. A bold Promise, and as inviting to every Reader who is charm'd with the Humour of that *English Cervantes*, as that of his own female Republican, who gave Notice on her Sign that she sold *Welch Ale*, was to Mrs. *Margery*.

Imitations of what kind soever are but a servile Way of Writing, and almost as ill judg'd, as it is a difficult Foundation to build on. Nature has given every Man a Face, and Make, and Manner peculiar to himself, which however graceful and becoming in him, would fit but awkward

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and

and indecent in another to whom they were not natural. She has dealt in the same Manner in her several Distributions of Genius, Wit, and Understanding. As she has made some tall, some short, she has form'd some of a grave, others of a merry Disposition: one has a Turn for Poetry; a second for Prose; a third is excellent at penning a grave Discourse; a fourth has a peculiar happy Talent at Pieces of Humour, which (Humour I mean) spreads itself into many Branches: In all which each Man has his proper Excellence, and must certainly proceed with the greatest Success in that he is most adapted to. Therefore every Man's Business, who would at the same Time write with Ease and gain Applause, is

To follow Nature where his Genius leads.

This Line belongs to a Poem lately publish'd by Dr. *Kirkpatrick*, entitled the Sea-Piece. He is here talking

talking of following the Bent of one's own Genius. This and the subsequent Lines are so much to my present Purpose, that I must beg leave to transcribe the whole Passage.

Ne'er, servile, trace the Path another treads,
But follow Nature where your Genius leads.
Nature, our common Dame, has well supply'd
Somewhat to each, distinct from all beside,
Which who pursues, discovers and obeys,
Shall stoop with Prudence, or ascend with Ease.
Why should I then this Spark of Nature quit,
To ape, assume, and pilfer other's Wit;
Which when with Care I cull, with Art dispose,
No more adorns me than another's Cloaths?

See the SEA-PIECE, pag. 35.

The Truth of this Maxim the weakest Brain one would imagine might discover; but such is the Perverseness of Mankind, that instead of making use of those Gifts Nature has been bountiful enough to bestow on them, they rather chuse to imitate any thing that they see attempted with Success by another Hand, than

submit to the Guidance of that secret Impulse they feel within them, which is sure to lead them right.

How true this is, the ill Success of almost all the Imitations that ever appear'd, plainly evinces ; which, while the illustrious Original remains in as great Repute as ever, sink into Oblivion. Dr. *Swift* is very arch upon a Dramatick Performance in Imitation of the great *Shakespear*, in which the only Likeness he could find out in the whole Piece consisted in a *Go to—In sooth—in faith my good Lord*, and such ingenious Instances. The *Jane Shore* of Mr. *Rowe*, whatever Merit it may have as a Tragedy, has certainly very little as an Imitation. And it is very lucky for that Gentleman who has enrich'd the World with the *Black-Prince*, that he thought of telling his Readers in his Title-Page, that he aim'd at the Manner of *Shakespear*, since without that Help, it would have been impossible
for

for the most discerning Critic to discover the Similitude ; though I do not doubt but the Author cramp't his own Genius to adhere the closer to the Manner of his Original, throughout that elaborate Performance.

A tolerable Original is greatly preferable to the best Copy. And it shews a greater Genius in passing with some Difficulty an untrodden Path, than to go without a Slip through a broad, beaten Track. And I do not think it one of the least of *Milton's* Excellencies, that he treats of

Things unattempted yet, in Prose, or Rhyme.

But so infatuated are the modern Tribe of Imitators that they imagine all the Commendations due to their great Masters, equally the Desert of them, their Followers : and that the same Road that led the first to Glory will guide them also, without ever reflecting whether they are equally furnish'd for the Journey.

But

But not to seem too hard on this Set, it must be own'd, a good Imitation deserves it's Share of Praise. The Support of a great Writer is a Prop to a weak Genius, and many a Modern has been kept from falling by being borne up by the Wings of an Ancient. And I don't know, whether their Task, if they arrive at any Perfection in it, is not more difficult than that of a good Translator. For they must write in the Manner of the copied Author, without taking his very Thoughts, and when they enter upon a Subject, must go on with it not as he has, but as he would have, pursued it. It requires a great deal of Judgment, and a very intent Perusal of a Man's Works to fall exactly into a similar Method of Style and Sentiment with him. I say a great deal of Judgment; because I don't think an Imitator is tied down to so strict an Adherence to his Original, as to transcribe his Defects as well

well as his Beauties: For a good Painter will soften an ugly Feature in a Portrait, and give as favourable a Likeness as he can, with any Degree of Resemblance, to the Countenance he endeavours to represent.

As it is the Business of a Copy to avoid a Blemish, he should also endeavour to improve a Beauty, if he can do it without deviating from the Manner of the Writer he intends to imitate. For it is not allowable to indulge ever so good a Thought contrary to his avow'd Pattern. Mr. *Dryden*, in the Preface to his *Miscellanies*, mentions a Dislike he had conceiv'd to two Lines in his own Translation of the Episode of *Lausus* and *Mexentius*, in the Tenth Book of *Virgil*, Because (says he) tho' they are good Lines, yet I am convinc'd they are more in the Way of *Ovid* than *Virgil*.

Now if so great a Genius as Mr. *Dryden* found it so very difficult to
keep

keep up the Sentiments of a Writer he was even translating, how much more so must it be to a Man who cannot boast an equal Share of Understanding, to write with Spirit in another Author's Manner, without purloining his very Thoughts ? But hold——while I am giving Laws to other Writers, I should consider that I am, at least *pro tempore*, a Servant of the Public myself, and I am at this Minute seiz'd with a sudden Tremor of all my Limbs, occasioned by my Fancy's haunting me with a lively Representation of one of my Masters rising up in a Fury, with a D—n this Fellow, why does not he pursue the Promise of his Title-Page ? Pray Sir, be seated, don't put yourself in a Passion, and I'll go on immediately.

These Remarks could hardly make a just Claim to that Impartiality, I have

have all along been so great a Stickler for, was I entirely to pass over in Silence the few Mistakes our Author has been guilty of in the Conduct of his several Performances. But I shall be very little inclin'd to enlarge on so disagreeable a Part of the Critic's Office. First then for *Joseph Andrews*.—We are told, that the chief End of these Pieces is the Extirpation of Vice, and the Promotion of Virtue ; to say the Truth, which the general Bent of them always tends to. But we fear this grand Rule has in some Places been too much disregarded. As the Works of Mr. *Fielding* are in every Body's Hands, there ought not to be a Line in them which should cause the modestest Lady a single Blush in the Perusal. This Delicacy of Style and Sentiment has been quite neglected in some Dialogues between the wanton Lady *Booby* and most innocent *Joseph Andrews* ; and more particularly so in

one Chapter, which must occur to the Remembrance of every Reader conversant with these Works. We may venture to say this one Chapter has been prejudicial to the young People of both Sexes, and that more Readers have look'd upon the Innocence of *Joseph Andrews* as Stupidity, than the Wantonness of *Lady Booby* as Guilt. Lewdness is too mean a Branch of Humour (if indeed it is a Branch of Humour) for a Man of Mr. *Fielding's* Sense to have Recourse to: and we hope that he will henceforth leave it to those barren Writers of Comedy who have no other Way of pleasing, but a scandalous Coincidence with the deprav'd Taste of a vicious Audience. The next Objection we shall make to *Joseph Andrews* is a general one, which includes the whole Performance. My Reader will start perhaps at the Thoughts of so extensive an Objection, but I must beg leave to say, that

that tho' the Narration is conducted with great Spirit, and there are innumerable Strokes of Wit and Nature throughout, it is no small Derogation to the Merit of this Work, that the Story on which it is founded is not sufficiently interesting. The Characters indeed are equally natural and entertaining with those of *Tom Jones*, but the Parts they are allotted engage much less of our Attention. In Dramatic Pieces, where the Story must be stretch'd into Five Acts, there is some Excuse for this Inaction, and Want of Incidents, but in these Performances, where the Length of the Work is left entirely to the Discretion of the Writer, little can be alledg'd in his Defence.

We will here take our Leave of *Joseph Andrews*, and briefly observe what deserves Reproof in Mr. *Fielding's* last Piece, viz. *Tom Jones*; a Performance which on the whole perhaps is the most lively Book ever

publish'd, but our Author has here and there put in his Claim to that Privilege of being dull, which the Critics have indulg'd to the Writers of Books of any Length.

— *Opere in longo fas est obrepere somnum.*

HOR.

— Sleep

O'er Works of Length allowably may creep.

FRANCIS.

The most glaring Instance of this kind in all this Author's Works is the long unenliven'd Story of *the Man of the Hill*; which makes up so great a Part of a Volume. A Narration which neither interests or entertains the Reader, and is of no more Service than in filling up so many Pages. The Substance of the Story is such as (to make use of Mr. *Shirley's* Phrase)

'almost staggers Credibility.'

For though I have heard it affirm'd, that there is such a Character as the
Man

Man of the Hill; yet I believe the Generality of Readers concurr'd with me in thinking it chimerical and unnaturally singular. I am very sorry Mr. *Fielding* should have introduc'd so improbable a Story, because there is no kind of Writing where the Rule of *Horace*, concerning Probability, should so strictly be observed, as in these Works.

*Ficta voluptatis causâ sint proxima veris;
Nec quodcunque volet, poscat sibi fabula credi.*

Of which be pleas'd, my courteous *English* Reader, to accept the following free Translation.

The Life-wrought Tale should ne'er advance
A Line that favours of Romance.

I am now most heartily tired of cavilling, for which Reason I shall take no Notice of the other few Blemishes in the Works of this Author, which may have arose from Heedlessness; or the Frailty of human Nature may have

have given Birth to. And which are more conspicuous in Writings so lively in general, as Freckles are more remarkable in those of Fair Complexions. Praise is Insolence where the Man that praises dares not discommend: on which Account I trust that our *English Cervantes* will not be offended at the Freedom I have taken in censuring some Parts of his Works. I have all along endeavour'd to act according to the laudable Resolution I took at my first setting out; that is, to proceed without Prejudice, or Partiality, like a candid, honest Critic, who will, (according to *Shakespeare* in his *Othello*)

‘ Nothing extenuate,

‘ Nor set down aught in Malice.

F I N I